



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2000

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Question 1

This question should have involved the discussion of frameworks that explain how attitudes influence behaviour and how persuasion impacts on attitudes. There were some excellent answers to this question where the focus of the answer was on the tools of persuasion such as reciprocation, commitment, liking and authority. Weaker answers concentrated on product attributes and elements of the marketing mix. This was not the approach sought to the question. Emphasis should have been on the recipient of the communication and how the persuasive process affects their attitudes. Some answers concentrated heavily on involvement and how levels of involvement determine the extent of influence that a marketing communicator may have on recipients. These answers while not incorrect narrowed the discussion to one element of the influence process only and as a result limited higher scoring on this question.

Question 2

There is a tendency when candidates see a question related to 'advertising budgets' to immediately start writing about methods of setting a budget. In many of these cases there is no reference back to the question asked and in these specific instances when this approach was taken there was no context as the relevance of budgeting methods to advertising accountability. Some candidates examined budgeting considerations in practice and related these back to the issue of accountability. These factors included objectives that the advertising is expected to achieve, competitive advertising activity and the importance of marketplace presence or share of voice and finally the amount of funds available. Candidates should have also looked at recent trends in budget allocation across the many aspects of marketing communications and how money has been switched to these activities because they are perceived to have more accountability in terms of sales achieved.

Question 3

This question sought a discussion on interactive media in comparison to traditional media. Discussion should have addressed the concept of interactive media, particularly the change from passive to interactive communication with the source, which allows for reciprocal behaviour. Some answers followed this discussion by showing how interactive media such as the Internet differ from conventional media in terms of advertising. Weaker answers gave examples of setting up of web pages for their companies; these answers were limited in terms of the issues examined.

Question 4

Essentially this question sought the candidate to address three areas in response to this question: empirical research to show evidence of effectiveness of advertising message, when to use message appeal, and responsiveness to message. There was good elaboration of fear and humour appeals. No one discussed either music or sex message appeals. Celebrities were discussed more for their personality rather than their relevance in an advertising context. Poor answers to this question concentrated on a description of an advertisement with no reference to any message appeal. While it is acknowledged that choice of message appeal is not a scientific process, considerable research is available to indicate generalizations about certain appeals. It is good to see candidates incorporating this material into their answers.

Question 5

This question on consumer oriented sales promotion sought answers to two interrelated issues, the objectives of sales promotion and consumer responsiveness to sales promotion. The question was not looking for detailed description of every consumer promotion deal. Good answers addressed the framework where each sales promotion technique is considered in terms of its marketing objective simultaneously with its consumer reward. This allowed the candidate to explore, for example, the appropriate techniques to use to achieve the objective of product trial and the consumer response of immediate. Weaker answers failed to address both objectives and responsiveness.

Question 6

There was a tendency to address this question in terms of advertising only and most conditions concentrated on describing the function of a full service advertising agency, few discussed alternatives to the full service agency. The functions most discussed were media and creative functions for advertising. Equal marks were awarded for both selection and functions those who addressed both issues achieved higher grades. Discussion on selection should have included the concept on integrated marketing communications and whether or not it affected choice of agency.

Question 7

This was generally a well-answered question where control was addressed through a discussion of proactive and reactive public relations. Generally product examples were given and there was much quoting of the classic cases of good handling of negative communication, in the case of Tylenol, and poor handling in the case Exxon Valdez. There could have been more discussion of forms of publicity such as product releases, executive statement releases and feature articles, and how these are used to control publicity.

Question 8

Guinness once again was the most quoted sponsor of events across a range of activities. Sports sponsorship was generally chosen to examine event marketing. Where candidates address the theoretical issues of management and using event marketing, answers were reasonably good. These answers included discussion of selection of event, using event marketing effectively and measurability. Weaker answers showed a poor attempt at relating a general description of the event to aspects of marketing communications. There was a need to show how event marketing allows a company to segment on a local regional and national level and the opportunity to reach lifestyle groups through a local event rather than the cluttered mass media.